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Gertie Sees It Through



Chapter 1 by Shannon Cook

Three old women sat around the washing tub, out in the warm sun in the village and watched the dirty children play football as they scrubbed clothes for the sick and the old. They gossiped and hummed, stating age old facts that all old women know, such as "It'll all end in tears" and "People in Glass houses".

"I reckon you gotta eat a pound of dirt before you die.." This was a less known adage and the other women gave the speaker mystified looks.

"What do you wanna go eatin' dirt for, Gertie?" Agatha, the more motherly of the three, murmured soothingly, hoping for something close to a sensible answer. Gertie was going Cats, and everyone knew it.

Cats was when you stopped smelling like a person like everyone else, and started talking weird and smelling like cat wee. Still, she was a dab hand at the laundry, and their friend, so the other two sat with her all the same.

"I reckon she thinks kids oughta be goin' around ingestin' germs and all sorts. I reckon she thinks that's sensible. Cats, I'm telling you." The third woman was of a stony disposition, stern and cold, but intrinsically good. If only because morals encouraged that sort of thing. The third woman was big on Morals.

"No, see the dirts good for you! Kids don't get no immune systems if they don't take in a lil bit of what's nasty. 'Sides, it's good for 'em. Like skinning your knee, you grow a scar, you get better.

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"Witches?" exclaimed Agatha as she looked around at the others, "What on earth are you talking about?" At this stage Gertie was already standing up and grabbing her bag. "What are you doing Gertie? Sit down!"

"Oh come on Agatha, be a bit more open-minded!" She said with a playful grin, her eyes twinkled and she started walking off with the strange man. Agatha was speechless, but the other ladies were most certainly not.

"Cats I tell you, completely off the rails!" they whispered. By now Gertie was already on the worn dirt path that lead into the woods, and Agatha was still staring, her mouth wide open.

"Alright Agatha, if you must come, you can. But none of the other ladies.". Gertie walked back and hooked her arm in Agatha's as they walked towards the man, who was already at the entrance of the wood trail, the old ladies snickers were left behind them.

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